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A  
*Serious Address*  
To the  
FREQUENTERS  
OF  
Play-Houses.

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A  
Serious Address  
TO THE  
FREQUENTERS  
OF  
**Play-Houses:**

Or rather,  
Serious MOTIVES

To draw People to a just Consideration  
of the *Folly, Sin and Danger* of *en-*  
*couraging, and being present* at those  
*unlawful Assemblies.*

Earnestly recommended to *Parents, Matrons, Guardians,*  
*Mistresses of Boarding-Schools*—and all others whom  
it may concern.

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*Felix quem faciunt aliena pericula cautum.*

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*Rebellion, MDCCXLVI.*

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## A Serious ADDRESS, &c.

THE Design of publishing the following Lines at this remarkable Juncture, calls for no other Apology for their being thus publickly addressed to every sober and considerate Mind, than what its own Weight and Importance most justly makes. The Cause it espoules, is VIRTUE and INNOCENCE; and the Practice it exposes, is quite the Reverse. The Detection of the One, and the Advancement of the Other, is what every serious Mind will, and every rational and accountable Being should, endeavour to forward and promote.

Now therefore, since it is true (as a learned and eminent Divine of our Church says) That “*Plays* are generally calculated for the *Meridian of VICE*, and to give “ a *Relish* to the *frothy Pleasures* of the *vain Part* of “ Mankind”; and as they are of a *Pagan Original*, invented by *Heathens* for the *Honour* and *Worship* of their *Demons*----and that a *Play-house* too was by the modest and vertuous *Romans* denounced as a *Temple of Satan*----what can so detract from the Principles of a rational Creature, what sink him more into the Dregs of base Degeneracy, than for him to spend his precious Time in the deplorable Pursuit after that *Vanity* which is insipid in itself, sinful in its Pleasures----and above all, whose End is eternal Misery!-----I say, what can so far confirm the *Infatuation of the Devil*, than for a rational Creature, to keep his Mind lock’d up in empty Vanities, while his immortal Part, (that *Ray of Light* proceeding from the infinite CREATOR of Heaven and Earth) is insensible, and unaffected even with its own Being?----What more beneath the Dignity of Human Nature, or below the Character of a *Christian*, than to see a Man pursue the *imaginary Happiness* of this Life, without considering the important Condition of standing at the general Audit, of receiving his Reward of being forever happy with God, or forever miserable with the Devil!-----How, O Man, canst thou bear thyself in such a State?---Wilt thou again resort to the *Play-house* for Comfort? Nay, but learn thou this Lesson first, That thou who pluckest thyself out of the Hand of

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God,

GOD, mayst rest assur'd, if thou perishest, thy Blood shall be upon thine own Head.

But ye Britons! my dear Countrymen! *Why* worship YE *false Gods*?---Why introduce YE into your Cities, *Plays* and *heathen Games*?----- Offer ye these Things as a *Token* of your *Thanksgiving* for the late memorable Deliverance of you out of the Hands of your Enemies? ---- Has the Edge of the Sword been blunted --- the Appearance of Famine turned into Plenty ---- your Corn and Oil, your Harvests preserv'd? ---- and shall all these Blessings of the God of Love be requited in the *Celebration* of *Heathen Sports* and *Interludes*? ---- Was it for this (may it not be enquir'd) the *Hand of the LORD* was stretched out to a rebellious, gainsaying People?---Was it for this the Sword was stopt from going through our Land---- the Plague among our Cattle stay'd ---- and the Staff of Life still retain'd among us? ---- Alas! such Blessings are enough to turn the very Heathen from the Powers of Darknes unto the Service of the Living God! --- And shall WE, who dare usurp the Sacred Character of Christians, be so dead, so stupid, so ungrateful, nay, so heathenish, as to cast such an Odium on our most holy Religion, our Laws, and the Honour of our Country, as to act beneath the Principles of those who will scarcely admit that there is a GOD? --- Is it not plain, that *Christian Vertue* must certainly be at a low Ebb when such Diversions are acted in Contempt of the TRUE GOD, and to ridicule Sacred Things, as were instituted by the Heathens in Honour of their fictitious Deities? ---- An Actor (as *Tertullian* observes) was a kind of Priest, and the Theatre a Temple. ---- [N.B. And may it not be fear'd, that even at this Day the Play-house passes for a Temple too, since it is generally more crowded than the Church, and its Performances more relish'd than a Subject from the Pulpit, deduced from the Authority of Holy Writ? Ye cannot deny it.]---And if we abide by the Testimony of History, we shall find that their Tragedy and Comedy (so call'd) were at first dedicated in devotional Hymns sung by the Pagans to their Gods. Nay, *Plato* affirms, That "the Commemoration of their Demons was celebrated with Hymns." And at Rome, after a small Series of Years, their Diversions were distinguish'd by Tragedy and  
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and Comedy--- but these corruptive Scenes were *Strangers* there while the *Roman Vertue* retain'd its *pristine Vigour*.----- But what a direct *Mockery* of the Holy, Wise, and True God is there in the Celebration of those *heathen Diversions*?----- And shall a *Christian Nation* so derogate from the Rules of Decency and Godly Discipline, as presumptuously to encourage a Set of People who retail to them the *Practice* and *Principles* of *Heathens*? ----- Forbid it, O thou God, whose Eyes cannot behold Iniquity! ---- Nay, it appears, that the *Greeks* had their solemn Hymns call'd \*  $\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\epsilon\varsigma\ \upsilon\mu\nu\sigma$ , which they sung to their *propitious Demons*. ---- The *Romans* also had their *peculiar Hymns* sung to the same *particular Deity*; and the Songs which the *Papists* sing to their *canoniz'd Saints* on their *Holy Days*, are *Copies* of those *Pagan Hymns*, that were only rude *Essays* toward *dramatick Poetry*. --- But Reader, *Thou* art commanded of God, yea, the only True God, *Him that sitteth in Heaven, who is able to kill and make alive, at whose Presence the Heaven and the Earth flee away, to make no Mention of the Names of other Gods*, (Exod. xxiii. 13.) And thus saith the LORD, (Jer. x. 13.) *Learn not the Way of the Heathen, for the Customs of the People are vain*.--- Therefore, flee Thou, as thou wouldst devouring Fire, the Sinner that should hereafter offer to entice thee to break the *Laws* and *Commandments* of God, lest he whet his *Sword*, and be avenged on such a Nation as that thou dwellest in.

Moreover, to rivet in thy Mind a still juster Abhorrence of the *accursed Practices* of the *Heathens*, the *Playhouse* is that *Sink of Iniquity*, where, in the *Representations* of *Fornication* and *Adultery*, all the *whole Body* of the People are *mentally* so---and, as one has it, "many who, it may be, came clean to the Play, return *Adulterers* and *Fornicators* (in their Hearts) from the Theatre."----- And it were well worth the while of virtuous Parents, Guardians, &c. to consider with an eminent and good Man, That "All pompous Diversions " are dangerous to a *Christian Life*, but none more so " than *Plays*; for they give so nice and natural a Re-



“ presentation of the Passions, that they soon affect the  
 “ Heart, especially with that of *dishonourable Love*, when  
 “ represented as chaste and innocent; for the more in-  
 “ nocent it appears, the more easily it insinuates itself.  
 “ Hence it is, too many go from the *Play* so charm’d  
 “ with the Pleasures of Love, that they are prepar’d to  
 “ put in Practice what *Immodesties* they saw represented  
 “ there.” For, as *Minutius Felix* expresses it, “ some-  
 “ times a luscious Actor shall whine you into Love, and  
 “ give the Disease he counterfeits.”

Now, ye tender *Parents, Guardians, &c.* can ye view this and not be mov’d? Will ye not from *this* resolve to build your Discipline upon *wiser* Motives than heretofore? Will you let those under your Care and Inspection, henceforth ever receive a *Play-Ticket* more, or ever suffer them to enter a *Play-house* during the Time at least they are under your special Direction? Surely you will not, lest God should suddenly require the *Souls* of such Persons at your Hands.

It is the Opinion of some of the most learned Sages of the heathen Times, as well as the Primitive Fathers, and some modern Divines, That *Play-houses* are, The *Fountains* and *Nurseries* of all *Wickedness*, wheresoever they are permitted.——And there is not a little Reason to fear, That as the *Players* are permitted from Place to Place in this Kingdom, they will, in Time, metamorphose the whole Country into *heathen Idolatry*. It is therefore melancholy to see, that any M-----e, or J-----e of the P-----e, CAN so far swerve from the *Tenour* of their *Commission*, the Honour of their GOD, their *King* and *Country*, as to permit them to take Footing near the Borders of any City or Town, in open Defiance too of the Laws lately made to suppress them, by Virtue of which a Magistrate is impower’d to send them to the *House of Correction* if they are found even to exhibit so much as a *Part* of any *Play, Prologue, or Epilogue*, much less to dare to exhibit whole Plays in common Form, in Contempt of all Authority, and the great Council of the Nation itself.——To what Effect is it to make Laws, chéose Magistrates, Ministers of Justice, Constables, and other Officers, if those Laws and the Oaths of such Persons are merely *formal*? — Is the



the Sword given in *vain*?-----What! shall the *heathen Assemblies* be countenanced amidst a (supposed) *serious, Protestant, Christian* People!--- a People who enjoy the glorious Privileges of the Gospel, under a mild, auspicious Reign, in the *invaluable* Dispensation of *Liberty of Conscience*!-----a People bless'd and enrich'd with all that Life calls dear, and yet deny the Greatness of those Blessings by the open and common *Practice of Evil*, and *worshipping false Gods*--- ecchoing to and countenancing those Diversions which the vertuous *Heathens* extruded their Cities and Towns, as the great *Incentives* to *Lewdness* and *Debauchery*, and denounced the Practice thereof as the very *Idolization of Demon Deities*?-----  
 Oh! what a Sight must it be to see a vertuous *Youth* of either Sex (but especially the *Fair* one) in a *Conventicle of Vice* --- whose Composition is that of *Rakes, Bullies, Fiddlers, Dancers* and *Players*! --- where Vice is represented in *Jest*, and afterwards practised in *good Earnest*! --- where the Allurements of the Stage insensibly insinuates into the *unwary* and *tender* Mind, and soon renders *insipid* the Adornments of Vertue, stirring up in them the *Fuel of Lust*, and at last (in all Probability) prove the melancholy Overthrow both of Body and Soul!

Oh! my Countrymen, if we value ourselves as Men of *Reason* and *Understanding*, let us not *wilfully* derogate from the *Principles* thereof, but submit to those *Convictions* which the *Consequence* momentarily confirms to be *divine*.-----If by *Reason* we allow that its Effect is, a steady, uniform *Light* that *shines* in the *Minds of Men*--- a *divine Touchstone*, by which Men are enabled to discern the Congruity and Incongruity of Propositions, and thereupon to pronounce them true or false, then let us not deny the Authority of incontestible Facts, as they occur in the Prosecution of the End aim'd at in this little Tract; and if I mistake not, it will contain enough to dissuade any reasonable Creature from any longer pursuing those Things, of which he has now great Occasion to be *ashamed*.

Men and Brethren, If you actually believe in the Existence of God---in Him that *sitteth on the Circle of the Heavens*, and ruleth all Things like a God indeed! --- at whose Presence the Hills melt like Wax--- who burneth up his Enemies round about him--- who measureth the

*Waters in the Hollow of his Hand* ---- and is from Everlasting to Everlasting! ---- that by Him all Things move and have their Being ---- in whom there is no Shadow of Turning or Alteration ---- a Being absolutely perfect, glorious and unchangeable ---- the *Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending* ---- the everlasting Self-existing Power ---- who stretcheth out the Heavens as a Curtain ---- who is the righteous Judge, the Almighty Dispenser of Rewards and Punishments ---- whose Eyes run to and fro the Earth, and which cannot behold Iniquity! ---- who seeth all Things, and knoweth the secret Thoughts and Intents of the Heart ---- who searcheth Jerusalem as with a Candle ---- and spieth out all our Ways ---- who by the Influence of his Holy Spirit hath given us to know his Rules and Ordinances instituted for our mutual Decorum, and that wilfully to break them, endangers our Sequestration from God ---- I say, upon this Hypothesis, Can a Man pretend to found his Principles of right Reason, and not think he must be answerable to God, the Supreme Law-giver, for his own particular Conduct, in every Branch of such Duties as result from the Belief and Sense of general Truths display'd in Sacred Writ, and manifested to every Man's Conscience? Certainly, as my own Existence is a Self-evident Principle that my immaterial Substance is a Part of the invisible Being, and made capable of enjoying the Love and Felicity of God, surely then I ought not to degenerate from the Dignity of my Nature, but act upon those Rules and Duties which divine Reason points out to me, namely, to consider that the Relation we stand in toward God, requires our Acknowledgment, Gratitude, Love and Dependance, and in one Word, our humblest Adoration of his infinite Perfections. And from whence we cannot but allow, that the Breach of any of these Rules is a Breach of the Law of God, an Offence against the Supreme Law-giver, a most high Indignity upon the Majesty of God, and a plain Demonstration that the pretended Rules of Reason and Divinity, are but so many empty Names, sounding Brass, and tinkling Cimbals.

I would now then advise every pretended Rationalist to consider the Inconsistency of numbering himself among Persons of that Character, whereas his Practices

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are directly opposite, as he denies the *Precepts* and *Prohibitions* of his GOD.--- Nay, he is an *Enemy* to Christianity, a *Heathen* in Fact, an *Idolater*, a *Pagan*, one who has not the least Regard to Vertue, but basely degenerated into a Life unbecoming the *Name* or *Character* of a *Christian*; a Partaker of those gross *Obscenities*, those *lying*, *unprofitable Diversions*, where *VICE* gets an *easy Passage* to his *Heart*; and, from an *Idea* reduced into *Action*, sunk from the *Man of Reason* into the Principles of a *brute Beast*--- and then *Impiety* becomes his *Heaven*!

Oh! ye *Rationalists* (or at least ye who so call yourselves) do you ever permit your *Reason* to co-operate with the Standing Rules of the *Word of GOD*? if not, your Knowledge is *Ignorance* to the last Degree--- ye are a *self-wise*, *stiff-necked* People, and *self-inconsistent* even with your *own Principles*. For what can be more absurd, than for a Man to set aside the Principles deduced from *Divine Revelation*, and embark on the Principles of a *Rationalist*, and yet *act retrograde* to the very *Motives* of *Reason*, by *breaking the Laws of GOD*, and entering the List of *Debauchees*, *Buffoons*, *Fidlers*, *Morricedancers*, *Players*! and all the Tribe of *diabolical*, *profane* Persons, whose *Practices* are said to be *invented by THE DEVIL*, it being Part of the *Worship* he requir'd of them, and which were *consecrated* to the *Honour*, and *appropriated* to *HIS Service* by *HIS special Direction*?--- For Shame, thou *Rationalist*, no more be immers'd in *Luxury* and *Darkness*--- no more lend thine *helping Hand* to fill up the *Measure of the Nation's Iniquity*, but turn thou unto *CHRIST*, the *blessed and immaculate Lamb*, who died for thy *Sins*, and rose again for thy *Justification*, and through whose *Death* thou mayst be a *Partaker of those Rivers of Pleasure* that flow at *GOD's Right Hand* forevermore!

But to hasten forward, I proceed next to shew, that the frequenting of Plays is the Celebration of *heathen Idolatry*, and a direct Affront to the Majesty of God.

Plays in their *first Design* were invented to *pacify the Anger of the Gods*, as *Jupiter*, *Bacchus*, *Neptune*, *Flora*, *Apollo*, *Diana*, *Venus*, or some other *Dunghill-Idol*, which the *Pagans* ador'd---to whose *Honour*, *Names* and *Memories* they were celebrated, as appears from the *Writings of the Antients*, as well as from the concurrent *Testi-*



monies of the primitive Christian Fathers. ---- And how deplorable is it to see this *Christian Isle* (which was once the Glory of the World) scandalously crowded with *Pagan Deities*, and the SUPREME BEING often *reviled*, through the ill Language that is generally given to them? ---- Though GOD forbids us to *make Idols*, or *swear* by them, yet what more common in Plays than, in Contempt of the SACRED ORACLES, to implore the Aid of *Jove, Juno, Apollo, Bacchus, Minerva!* ---- than to *swear by Jove! by Mars! by Venus!* ---- *Oh! ye Powers! Oh! ye Gods!* ---- Now all these are *fictitious Deities*, and the Practice of our *Actors* herein, is a *direct Imitation* of the *Heathens*, who *supplanted* their departed *Heroes* as *Gods*, commonly in their *Poems* and *Interludes*. The foul Obscenities with which their *devotional Hymns* and *Plays* were generally intermix'd, render'd 'em odious to the thinking Part of Mankind even in those dark Ages. ---- And what *Heathen*, possess'd only with moral Vertues, (so call'd) would not be asham'd of *our Country*, where *Heathenism* is so *nicely retail'd*, inasmuch as the very *heathen Idols* are invok'd in *direct Contempt* of the GOD of HEAVEN! and *countenanced* too by the (*wou'd-be thought*) wise and reasonable Part of our Nation, under the Character of *innocent Diversions* and *Amusements!* fit to chace away *Melancholy!* and to kill the tedious Hours withal! *turning the Day into Night, and the Night into Day!* ---- while the Rules of Religion, Charity and Love are in a Manner extruded the Face of the Earth.

But that the Reader may no longer be kept from coming to the Thing more ardently propos'd, proceed we now to produce the Opinion of the *Heathens*, as well as the *Fathers* and some *modern* and eminent *Divines*, on this Head.

*Plato* (about the 325th Year of *Rome*) would suffer no Plays in his Commonwealth, because it was *dangerous to Morality*.

*Aristotle* (born about 384 Years before CHRIST) forbade the seeing of Comedies to young People, because it would *poison their Minds*.

*Xenophon* (who lived in the 105th Olympiad) commends the *Persians* for not suffering their Youth to hear Comedies.

Tully



*Tully* declaims against Plays and licentious Poems, as *The Plague of Society*; and blames *Trabea* and *Cæcilius*, two Comic Poets, for magnifying *Love Adventures*, making *Cupid* a God, and flourishing too much on the Satisfaction of Sense: He complains also of Tragedy, how, in many Instances it *baffles the Force of Vertue*.

*Valerius Maximus* look'd upon the permitting of Plays as a *Blemish to the Roman State*.

*Tacitus* complains how the *Roman Vertue* and *Discipline* had been corrupted by the Stage; and how whole Nights were taken up by those Plays, and *no Time left to be honest*. He inveighs much against *Nero* for introducing all *Kinds of Vice* by Stage-plays.

*Plutarch* in his *Morals*, does not only condemn Plays as *lascivious Vanities*, and *contagious Evils*, but *Poetry* itself, as full of *Lies*; and quotes *Socrates* as a Voucher.

*Ovid*, that wanton Poet, informs *Augustus*, that Play-houses are the *Nurseries of all Wickedness*, and the *Congress of Adulterers*. In his Poem *de Arte Amandi*, he tells his vicious Associates, That the Play-houses were the best *Fairs* for unchaste Bargains, the most commodious Haunts for amorous Fellows, and only Places for Panders and Whores---[*Hear ye this ye modest Fair!*]---- Then adds, " 'Twas impossible for *Parents* or *Husbands* to keep their *Children* and *Wives* chaste, while Plays were suffer'd in the City," Lib. 3. In another Place he advises all those who would live chastely, to withdraw from the Play-house, and to throw away all *Play-books* and *amorous Poems*.

*Propertias*, an obscene Poet, cries out against the *Theatres*, as the *Instruments of his Ruin*.

*Isocrates*, a Greek Orator, exclaims against all Actors and Players, as *scurrilous* and *mischievous*, and *intollerable Plagues to a City*.

*C. Plinius Secundus* stiles Stage-plays *effeminate Arts*, altogether unbecoming Men, and applauds the Emperor *Trajan* for banishing them out of the *Roman Empire*.

*Solon*, one of the wisest Men of *Greece*, condemn'd Plays, as *Evils not to be suffer'd in a City*.

Many more *Heathens* might be produced, as *Quintilian*, *Macrobius*, *Juvenal*, *Horace*, *V. Paternulus*, *Diód. Siculus*, &c. but these are sufficient to shew, in what  
Repute

Repute VERTUE was among some of them, and how they *abhor'd* the Stage, as an *Enemy to all Good*.---“And shall the Followers of the crucified JESUS (adds a certain pious and Reverend Author) countenance these *Theatrical Entertainments*, which *Heathens* censur'd as the *Plague of Societies*, and *Ruin of common Morality*?”---  
 Forbid it, O thou GOD of GODS, and LORD of LORDS! Rather let the uplifted Thunderbolt be again resum'd; rather let us die than *stifle the Convictions of Conscience*, or again tread the Temples of the *Pagan Gods*!---- Oh! let the *Frequenters* of those *Synagogues of Satan* be sensible of their *Rebellion* against Thee, in whom alone is comprized all the Pleasure and Glory of *eternal Happiness*!

The great *Lactantius*, who liv'd *A. D.* 303. speaking of Plays, says, “ They only serve to *excite Lust*, and “ the more *artful* the Actors are in the *Representations*, “ the more *Mischief* they do.”

*Tertullian* calls the Play-house the *Sink of Debauchery*, the *Chapel of Venus*, or a *Barwy-house*; [and will the *modest Virgins* and *modest Wives* of England go there?] and that as many Persons as sit in the Playhouse, *so many unclean Spirits are present*. This Father gives an Account of a Christian Woman, who, going to the Play-house, was there *possessed of the Devil*; and when, at his casting out, was ask'd by the Exorcist, How he durst enter into a *Christian*? he answer'd, *I found her upon my Ground*!--- He tells us of *Danger* in the *best-complexion'd* Entertainments of the Stage; look therefore, adds he, upon all the *engaging* and *pleasing* Sentences, as *Honey dropping from the Bag of a Toad*.

*Clemens Alexandrinus*, who liv'd *A. D.* 192. declares against Stage-plays, as *Schools of Impiety*, *pestilent Sports*, and *Introductions to all Kinds of Immorality*.

St. *Cyrilostom* reproves the People of *Antioch* for their resorting to Play-houses, which he stiles the *Devil's Conventicles*; and says, that Stage-plays are the *Devil's Poms*, *Fables of Satan*, *Demoniacal Assemblies*, *impure Food of the Devil*--- [And will ye, ye *virtuous Christians*, be fed with *this Food*?--- Rather seek ye the *Bread* that cometh down from Heaven.----- Beware, lest your Eyes catch a *Blast*, and ye make a *Covenant with eternal Death*! ]

*Death!*] Nay, ye not only *see*, but *hear* unclean Words and obscene Songs----[*which to young Misses of Boarding-Schools, &c. must be fine Diversion!*]---- Where, for Goodness' Sake, is now your boasted *Reason*?---- even the Dictates of *common Morality* are too strong for you.---- Now, if neither the Rules of *Reason*, *Morality*, or *Christianity*, be your Guide *here*, what a shocking Figure must you make *when the Secrets of all Hearts shall be open*, and you are call'd upon to give an Account of the Things done in the Body, and to receive your Reward accordingly?---- But is not your *nice Nature* yet offended? --- then let me intreat you, no longer give yourself up to the inticeing *Snares of the Devil*, but earnestly cry unto God, to take away the Evil from your *Heart*, and never go near such Places more.

It is indeed a true Saying of *Isodore Pelusiota*, who flourish'd about the Year 412, That *their*, (i. e. the Play-houses) *End is to draw Men into Sin*.

*Gregory Nazianzen*, who flourish'd A. D. 370, says, that they are the *Propagators* of all *Lewdness*, and that the Play-house is the *Wanton's Shop*.

And *Salvian*, Bp. of *Marseilles*, says, "Plays are the  
 " *Deluders of our Hopes, Cheats of Life, and Repast of the*  
 " *Devil*: for there the *Salvation* of Christian People  
 " is destroy'd, and the *Majesty of G O D* profaned, by  
 " *sacrilegious Superstitions*; the *Heathen Deities* are sub-  
 " *stituted to all their Pastimes*; --- in the one Place there  
 " is *Immodesty*---in another *Lasciviousness*---in another  
 " *Madness*---and the *Devil in them all*; --- nay, *all*  
 " *the Devils in Hell* (adds this Author) are in every one  
 " of the Places of these Pastimes; for they *preside over*  
 " the Places dedicated to their *Worship*."

By the *African Code* (or Statute Laws) it appears, that Stage-players were rank'd among *Apostates*. The *Women Actors* were counted so scandalous, that whoever married any of them, made himself incapable of being a *Clergyman* by the Apostolical Canon.

The 6th Council of *Constantinople*, which consisted almost of *Bishops*; the 2<sup>d</sup> *Nicene Council*, held about 785, where were present 3 or 400 *Bishops*; the *Lateran Council*, A. D. 1215, consisting of *Two Patriarchs*, 70



Arch-bishops, 400 Bishops, and 800 Abbots and Priors, universally condemn *Plays* and *Interludes*, and all *Theatrical Sports*; and it is the wise Observation of another antient Council (as well as *Precept* for both *Clergy* and *Laity* of all Countries) That “ it better becomes *Holy Men* to *mourn*, than *laugh* at *foolish Speeches* and “ *obscene Jest*s of *Stage-players*.”

And among the many Opinions of the Sons of the Church of ENGLAND, are the following:

Dr. Parker, Arch-bishop of Canterbury, condemns Plays in his Book *de Antiq. Eccl. Brit.*

Dr. G. Alley, Bishop of Exeter, and Divinity Lecturer of St. Paul's, in the 2<sup>d</sup> Year of Queen Elizabeth, declares with great Warmth against Stage-plays, as the *Fuel of Lust*, *Occasion of Adultery*, and other intollerable Evils.  *Lond. 1571.*

Dr. Beard of Huntingdon, and Dr. Taylor, the famous Preacher of Aldermanbury, speaking of Plays, &c. say, “ They have no other Use but to deprave and corrupt good Manners, and open a Door to all Uncleanness. — “ The Holy Scripture is often by these filthy Swine “ profaned. \*

Archbishop Usher, (that most noble Pattern of Piety and Learning) speaking of Interludes and Stage-Plays, says, “ They offend against the 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment in

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\* To the Support of this we need only revise the Catalogue of *French Plays* in the *Gent. Mag.* for April 1746. where the Reader will find, when *The Commemoration of the Virgin Mary*; *The Mystery of the Nativity*; *The Mystery of St. John the Baptist*; *The Comedy of the Adoration of the Three Kings* to Jesus Christ; and many other Sacred Themes, were the *Drolls* of publick Stage-players, *Fidlers*, *Dancers*, *Buffoons*. — Tiberius, none of the best of Emperors, condemn'd all Players to the *Whipping-post*, and then banish'd them out of Italy, as unsufferable Evils. *Tacit. An. l. 1.* — Augustus too, order'd the Players to be whipped, and afterwards exiled, as intollerable Plagues to a State. *Hylas & Pylas, Suet. Octav. Sect. 45. p. 82, 83.*

“ several



“ several Instances, besides the Wantonness therein used  
 “ in Attire, Speech and Action.” He says, “ They  
 “ that go to see Sights, hear such Words, shew their  
 “ Neglect of Christian Duty, and Carelessness in Sining,  
 “ whenas they *willingly* commit themselves into the  
 “ *Snare of the Devil.* Vid. *Body of Divinity*, 1702.

Arch-bishop Tillotson, Bishop Kennett, Dr. Bray, Dr.  
 Horneck, one and all, inveigh greatly against Plays and  
 Interludes; and Bishop Tillotson in particular speaks very  
 warmly on the Subject--- speaking of some Parents says,  
 “ They are such *Monsters*, I had almost said, *Devils*,  
 “ as not to know how to give good Things to their  
 “ Children.—— Instead of bringing them to GOD’s  
 “ Church, they bring them to the *Devil’s Chapels*, to  
 “ *Play-houses*, and *Places of Debauchery*, those *SCHOOLS*  
 “ and *NURSERIES of Lewdness and Vice.* Vid. his  
 Sermon on *Education of Children*, p. 153, 154.

From these Quotations it appears (though abundance  
 more might be collected) that both in heathen Times  
 and when the Gospel also had diffus’d itself abroad, this  
*pestilential Disease* touched the several Borders of both  
 Havens; and it is demonstrable to a Truth, That the  
 antient Heathens and Christians (as well those of modern  
 Date) look’d upon the Entertainments of the Stage, as  
 both *shameful* and *dangerous*.—— And shall a Country  
 like *this* (so immediately under the Eye of God) *counte-*  
*nance* such scandalous Productions of *Heathenism*; *throw*  
*Dirt in the Face of the Almighty*, for their late signal  
 Deliverance; and *do Despite to the Majesty of GOD*? ----  
 I trust not, but that one and all will stand up to *put the*  
*Laws in Execution*, and extrude those Monsters of Ini-  
 quity from the Borders of our Country.—— Let us  
 assist the Magistrate in doing that Duty, to the Discharge  
 whereof he is bound by the Laws of the Land.---- Let  
 us call upon the proper Officers, who break their Oath,  
 (and forfeit *Ten Pounds* by an Act of Queen Anne) if  
 they do not present all *Seminaries of Vice and Immorality*  
 to the Quarter Sessions of the City or County where  
 these *Apostates* shall dare to intrench themselves: ---- Let  
 us begin *now* to put our Hand to *this Plough*: ---- Let  
 us suppress not only *Players*, but also those other *Cursed*

*Sinks of Iniquity, the BAWDY-houses, Gaming-houses, Skittle-Allies* (those other *Nurseries of the Devil*)---punish their Keepers, as also the open and profane *Swearer* and *Sabbath-breaker*, without Distinction. Begin at the Head; flaming all Degrees of Men as we go on, by making Examples of our *Favourites* and *Friends* FIRST. --- Let not the Sword be held in vain; but ardently press upon *Justice* to stretch forth its Hand towards a *general Reformation*. --- Let not the present *new Law* against *Swearing* be made in *vain*, but each Man watch his Brother, and punish the Guilty, as he will answer the same before GOD. ---- Let us like *true Lovers* of the blessed JESUS, join Hands heartily in this laudable Undertaking; and let no Man be *asham'd* of the Honour of GOD, lest he be *denied* at the last Day, according to the Tenour of the Sacred Writ.

But alas! upon a melancholy Reflection, what Success can we hope for, when all these flagrant Abominations are so *openly* practised, and receive so *open* a Sanction from those whose Business it is to suppress them; who, instead of becoming *Patterns of Vertue*, are too often *themselves* unhappily found running with the Vulgar (in Contempt too of their *solemn, baptismal Vow*) into the *Pomps, Vanities, and Wickedness* of a base degenerate Age? ---- But supposing no Man were to gain the least Prevalency over the indigent Transcript of *mock Vicegerency*, who *will* be the deaf Adder, the corroborate *Abettors* to a Nation's Guilt, yet 'tis hop'd, the following pathetick Lines will not lose their Vertue, among the *wise and sober Part* of Mankind, if perus'd without Prejudice, and apply'd with Meekness, and conscientious Impartiality. They are the Words of an eminent Divine, who upon the same Principles of this Editor, did once embark toward tracing out some Footsteps of a general Reformation. After he has briefly recited the *Blasphemies and Immoralities* of the Stage, he concludes--- "To sum up all--- to attend these ludicrous  
 " and obscene Shews, and take Pleasure therein, is un-  
 " becoming the Man, the Gentleman and the Christian.  
 " ----How unbecoming the Dignity of a rational Na-  
 " ture, to act the Part of a Buffoon, or to be pleas'd  
 " with those who do so? What Violence does he offer  
 " to

" to the Reason of Mankind, who represents *Vice* as  
 " fashionable and genteel? And what a sorry mean  
 " Soul actuates that Man who makes these ludicrous  
 " Actions the Ingredients of his Pleasures? What a  
 " Diminution to the Honour of Gentlemen (who by  
 " Birth are design'd for Offices of State) to go to Chil-  
 " drens Plays, at the Expence of so much Time and  
 " Money, and all for the Diversion of a little Laughter,  
 " rais'd by Buffoons, Vagabonds, Jesters, Strollers,  
 " Dancers, Fiddlers, Players, who go about to *poison*  
 " the Mind and Morals of the Nation, and to teach  
 " People to *whore* and *swear* the shortest Way.

" What a pretty Figure does my Gentleman make,  
 " when he stands bare-headed before a Parcel of *Scoun-*  
 " *drel Actors*, who are *infamous* by the Laws of the  
 " *Gentiles*, as well as those of *England*, and whose Of-  
 " fice at best is only to excite rude and excessive Mirth,  
 " and clownish Laughter in the Audience, without the  
 " least Pretence to moral Instruction?---- Gentlemen  
 " generally are (*or should be*) Men of Politeness and  
 " good Taste;----how ridiculous is it to see these mix  
 " with the Dregs of the People, who have no Relish  
 " of Decency and Honour in their rustick Acclamations?  
 " ----How awkward a Figure does the *grinning Gentle-*  
 " *man* make, when the *Modesty* of his *Lady* (and *all*  
 " her Sex) is attack'd by *impudent Actors*?-----To see  
 " the *Christian* in the Play-house, that *Conventicle* of  
 " *Vice*, is yet more shocking!-----What! thou a *Christ-*  
 " *ian*, and a *Spectator* of those *wanton Pastimes* and  
 " *Actions* that constitute the greatest Part of some  
 " Plays?-----What thou a *Christian*, a Member of  
 " the Church, and frequent the Play-house, that *School*  
 " of *Darkness*, and *Rendez-vous* of *Debauchees*?-----  
 " With what Pleasure can Ladies and Gentlemen of  
 " Vertue, associate with these?-----With what Face  
 " dare you behold the *Holy Temple*, who *defile* your  
 " *Eyes* with being Spectators of *vain* and *wanton Shows*?  
 " --- With what *Conscience* can you approach the Sacred  
 " Table one Day, and run to the Play-house the next,  
 " whose Entertainment is *Smut*?-----And give me  
 Leave to add, May not the Practice thereof be justly  
 deem'd, *wilful Rebellion* against God? or at least an



*Infatuation of the Devil?* — Ye Parents, ye Guardians, ye Matrons, ye pretended Rationalists! no longer derogate from your boasted Principles, but break off from these wicked Practices *yourselves*, lest the *Unclean Spirit* carry you from the *Play-house* to the *Masquerade*, which is the “very Dregs of Baseness, and which sink the Honour of Human Nature to the *lowest Ebb of* “*INFAMY*.”

But oh! who can proceed to describe the dark Scenes transacted there, and not tremble! — Who can think of the vile and destructive Assignations there, without being seiz'd with Horror! --- and who is so hard of Heart as not to lament the Inauguration of so *damnable a Vice* into this Kingdom! --- so shocking to human Nature, to Vertue, to common Honesty, without smiting upon his Breast at the Degeneracy of so noble a People! --- We borrow'd this pompous Diversion also from *Pagans*, and in *acting* it, says a modern Divine, we are *worse than Pagans*: For *Masquerades* were *invented by Heathens* in Honour of their *false Gods* — but among *Christians*, how is the awful, TRUE GOD dishonour'd, by the promiscuous Congress of Masqueraders, whose nocturnal Revels, if not restrain'd, will prove of the utmost Fatality to this Nation: For certainly God will not suffer his Honour much longer to be laid in the Dust by the *Insolence* of his *Creature*. “It is a Pastime utterly unlawful, being a *Congress to an unclean End*; not a *Mystery of Iniquity*, but an *open Scene of outrageous and flaming Debauchery*; where Temptation is passionately courted, the wanton Imagination indulged to the last Degree, so that none who go there *return* from thence *chaste and innocent*. — [What think you of this, ye tender Husbands, Parents, &c. ?] — The most vertuous and resolute Mind is by Degrees soften'd, and at last dissolved into Sensuality: These are the *common and sad Effects* of the amorous Intreagues, and those *luscious Indecencies* (heighten'd by the *Incantments of Musick*) usually practised by Masqueraders.” — Nay, this judicious Author asserts, that “it is not long ago, since a certain Gentleman, who frequented those Plays, *debauched his own* “*DAUGHTER*; but when the *Mask* was thrown off, “and she appear'd to be his *own Child*, what Rage, “Vex-



“ Vexation and Anguish possess’d the miserable Father,  
 “ who liv’d under horrible Convulsions in his Mind,  
 “ and at last died with great Terror and Distraction.”

—— Now, ye *indulgent Mothers*, ye *Matrons*, *Tutors*,  
 and all who must hereafter render an Account of your  
 Deeds, to *You* again I speak, What Tongue can express,  
 or Mind conceive, the Depth of the Iniquity of this  
 (*now*) *English Malady*! ——— But again ---- Is not  
 DANCING too of *Heathen Institution*, and the *first Step*  
 to these Debauched Scenes? It was common with the  
*Pagans*, in their Solemnities and Festivals, to honour  
 their *Idols* with *Dances* and *antick Postures*; hence it is  
 we read of their *dancing Priests*, as the *Corybantes*, *Salii*,  
*Curetes*, &c. Therefore the Practice of *Dancing* is scan-  
 dalous in its *Nature*, and hath *Poison* in its *Constitution*----  
 and what an absurd and disingenuous Practice is it, to  
*celebrate* a glorious Enterprize with *Dancing*, *Fidling*, and  
*Bag-piping*! --- to entertain a ----- bless’d with Success  
 from on High, with *Plays*, *Balls*, and *Masquerading*,  
 instead of a *Thanksgiving*! ---- Oh! my Country! how  
 long wilt thou provoke an *angry God*! ---- Remember,  
*The Sword is yet unsheath’d*; War is not yet withdrawn  
 from thy Borders; --- and how knowest thou, but *Famine*  
 and *Pestilence*, will at length be thine *horrible Destination*!  
 Oh! then, repent, repent, that ye drink not the *Cup of*  
*the LORD’s Fury at his Hand*!

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### ADVICE to BRITAIN.

THE Day is come! --- Day of Rebuke and Scorn;  
 The Cities tremble, and the Countries mourn.  
 Our Crimes have reach’d celestial Seats on high,  
 And at the Throne supreme for Vengeance cry.  
 Here *Science* long her choicest Store display’d,  
 And *Wisdom* in our Streets, with Light array’d,  
 Has cry’d aloud, “O Britain! hear my Voice,  
 My Call’s to you, I in your Bliss rejoice:  
 The Path to Health I shew, of Life impart;  
 I give true Pleasures, and enlarge the Heart.

My

My Joy's sincere, unhurt by Change or Time;  
 Pure are my Views, and ev'ry Tho't sublime;  
 Fit to improve, and raise the human Mind,  
 For highest Deeds, and heav'nly Bliss design'd,"

But Woe the Day! tho' *Wisdom's* Voice invites,  
 Calls to true Bliss and durable Delights;  
 Thro'out the Land exults the tho'tless Soul,  
 And boundless Riot reigns without Controul.  
 Gay Pleasure charms, and strong attracts the Heart,  
 And festal Joys their highest Gust impart.  
 Luxurious Meals each Day with Wine unite,  
 And studied Scenes of Sense engross the Night;  
 Dice, Cards, and heighten'd Mirth the Souls Delight;  
 Devoid of Thought, which *Wisdom's* Voice inspires,  
 Sunk in the Whirlpool of untam'd Desires.

From hence! enormous Vice triumphs aloud,  
 The beastly *Drunkard* bold harrangues the Crowd;  
*Adult'ry* vile, *unmask'd*, insults the Land,  
 And with audacious Front, leud *Harlots* stand:  
*Injustice* fierce in ev'ry *Village* reigns,  
 In vain the *weak*, in vain the *wrong'd* complains.  
 That Sacred Mind, (which ever be ador'd!)  
 Our great Creator, and our Sov'reign LORD;  
 How is His Holy and tremendous Name  
 Torn by the lawless Crowd, *secure from Blame!*  
 Men now their *Neighbour* with fierce *Curses* load,  
 And *Hell* invoke to make those *Curses* good.  
 The bold *Blasphemer* vents his Hell-born Rage,  
 Insults his God, and dares with Heav'n engage.  
*HELL* opens wide to tame th' ath'istic Race,  
 The *Mist of Darkness* their detested Place.

Did GOD for this exert Almighty Love?  
 Did CHRIST for this forsake the Realms above?  
 Did GOD for this his Hate to Vice declare?  
 And CHRIST the Weight of our Offences bear?  
 Was it for this celestial *Wisdom* cry'd?  
 Was it for this the World's kind Saviour dy'd?  
 Did GOD for this give *Britain* wide Command?  
 For this did *Knowledge* triumph in our Land?

----What

---- What Hopes remain, but Heav'n will on our Head  
 In righteous Wrath its fiercest Curses shed ?  
 A dread Example, full expos'd to Sight,  
 Of Hate to Order, and Contempt of Light !  
 Thus *Salem* (where once God was pleas'd to dwell)  
 Is sunk, like *Sodom*, to the Gates of Hell ;  
*Fullness of Bread, false Pride, and wanton Lust,*  
 Have laid its Glory in the abject Dust.

Rouse, *Britain*, rouse, from thy lethargic State,  
 With Tears and Pray'rs avert *impending Fate* ;  
 In Sackcloth weep the Nation's sad Decay,  
 And all thy Crimes before thy Maker lay ;  
 Let Priest and People at his Altar fall,  
 And prostrate, to our God for Mercy call ;  
 Lament their Faults, from all their Vices turn,  
 And ev'ry hateful Deed in Ashes mourn ;  
 That so our God may stay his righteous Wrath,  
 With-hold his Hand, tho' the dread Word's gone forth :  
 Bid the Destroyer sheath th'avenging Sword,  
 Pity his People, and recall his Word.  
*This* can alone prevent the Wrathful Day,  
 Avert his Anger, his just Vengeance stay ;  
 Make him to hear our Sighs, our Groans attend,  
 And streaming Mercy to our Succour send ;  
 Once more be jealous to his weeping Land,  
 Forbid the Heathen in our Gates to stand ;  
 Command his Sun to dart its chearful Ray,  
 Bid him again his liv'ning Beams display ;  
 The noxious Vapour from our Country drive,  
 Renew our Cattle, give our Corn to thrive ;  
 Bid Joy once more to the faint Heart return,  
 And th' humble Soul no more its Sorrows mourn.

*Obedience* only can restore our Peace,  
 Dispel the Gloom, and make our Woes to cease ;  
 Give true Delight.---- This *Britain* shall be thine,  
 If with *Repentance* thou *Amendment* join ;  
 If thou, submit, to meet thy God wilt move,  
 Calm Peace of Mind the contrite Heart shall prove,  
 And Souls obedient find their God is *Love*.

F I N I S.



1. The first of these is the fact that the  
 2. second of these is the fact that the  
 3. third of these is the fact that the  
 4. fourth of these is the fact that the  
 5. fifth of these is the fact that the  
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